



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

REGION 7
901 NORTH 5TH STREET
KANSAS CITY, KANSAS 66101

MAY 19 2010

Jane Darnell
Forests and Grasslands Supervisor
Nebraska National Forest
125 North Main Street
Chadron, NE 69337

Dear Ms. Darnell:

RE: Final Environmental Impact Statement for Travel Management on the Nebraska National Forest

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has reviewed the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the Nebraska National Forest Travel Management Plan for the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Our review is provided pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) 42 U.S.C. 4231, Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations 40 C.F.R. Parts 1500-1508, and Section 309 of the Clean Air Act (CAA). The FEIS was assigned the CEQ number 20100136.

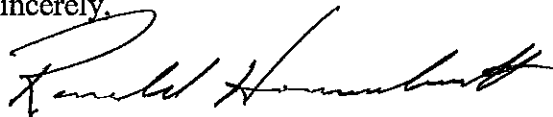
The Final EIS did not address EPA's concerns on the appropriate measurement of environmental impacts, rationale for the use of metrics in the selected alternative, or clarify why the impact of "off road use" was not tabulated in the summary. As stated in our previous comments, the impacts metric has an integral effect on the assessment of overall impacts. This continues to be a concern both regionally and nationally and we would like to work further with your agency to address it. In addition, the FEIS did not clarify how particular locations of off-road vehicle use were calculated and/or reconcile inconsistencies of impacts we identified across the alternatives.

Lastly, the FEIS did not include existing stream and sedimentation and water quality impacts (under Alternative 1) which could have been compared to *projected* water quality impacts under each of the additional alternatives and provided a better comparison. EPA continues to support avoiding and minimizing adverse impacts to water quality, wildlife, especially aquatic resources and their habitat. We suggest that waters be characterized for reference conditions, and that monitoring and mitigation plans be established and included in the Record of Decision (ROD).

EPA appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on the FEIS and we would like to continue working with the Forest Service as it implements the 2005 Travel Management Plan Rule. We believe that addressing our comments will aid in balancing the needs of all users of the Nebraska Forests lands as well as minimizing the impact of Off Highway Vehicles (OHVs).

If you have questions please contact Ms. Amber Tucker, NEPA Reviewer, of my staff, at 913-551-7565 or tucker.amber@epa.gov, or Mr. Joe Cothorn, NEPA Team Leader, at 913-551-7148 or cothorn.joe@epa.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ronald F. Hammerschmidt". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "R" and a long, sweeping underline.

Ronald F. Hammerschmidt, Ph.D.
Director
Environmental Services Division